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French Fake a Murder to Aid Rumanian Spy

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PARIS, Aug. 31 — A Rumanian spy decorated for having "liquidated" a political dissident — a murder that in fact never took place — and the man he was supposed to have killed said today that the entire episode had been faked to enable the spy to defect.

The intended victim, a dissident Rumanian writer named Virgil Tanase, turned up alive and well at a news conference here this afternoon, saying he had spent the last three months at a hideaway in Brittany guarded by agents of the French counterintelligence service.

The Rumanian agent sent to assassinate him, identified only as "Mr. Z," and another Rumanian dissident writer, Paul Goma, also appeared at the news conference.

Time for Family to Escape

The agent said that instead of carrying out his mission, he defected and helped the French organize the fake kidnapping of Mr. Tanase on a Paris street in May to give himself time to return safely to Rumania and arrange for his family to escape to the West as well.

The French Government refused any official comment on the cloak-and-dagger tale, but a senior Government official privately confirmed its basic accuracy. In a hotly worded statement, the Rumanian Embassy in Paris denied the existence of any Rumanian plot to kill the two writers.

"Mr. Z," a youngish, bearded man with gold-rimmed glasses who resembles a schoolmaster, said he was "a senior officer" in the Rumanian secret service and that he had worked as a spy in France for about eight years, mainly gathering economic and scientific intelligence. In February, he said, he was ordered to "physically liquidate" Mr. Tanase and Mr. Goma.

Both writers, who have been living in France for several years, had greatly annoyed President Nicolae Ceausescu of Rumania, "Mr. Z" said. The Rumanian President was apparently angered by an article Mr. Tanase published in a French magazine entitled "His Majesty Ceausescu the First, King of the Communists," and by the account of political repression in Rumania in Mr. Goma's book "The Dogs of Death."

"Mr. Z" said he could not bring himself to carry out his orders and instead went to the French counterintelligence service, telling them he wanted to defect and providing details of the assassination plot. To avoid arousing suspicion in Rumania and to give "Mr. Z" time to arrange for the departure of his family, the French decided to pretend the assassination plan was proceeding as ordered and persuaded the two "victims" to cooperate.

First, "Mr. Z" said, he staged a mock

attempt to kill Mr. Goma by squirting a lethal poison into his glass at a cocktail party, using a specially adapted fountain pen. But a French counterintelligence agent "accidentally" knocked the glass from Mr. Goma's hand before he could drink it, and "Mr. Z" was able to return to Bucharest and explain to his superiors that the plan had been upset by "unforeseeable circumstances."

While in Bucharest, "Mr. Z" said he got the Rumanian secret service chief to endorse a plan to hire French gangsters to kidnap Mr. Tanase and murder him. On May 20, Mr. Tanase was seized on a Paris street — though by French agents, not assassins — shoved into a car and driven off, not to be seen again until his reappearance today.

His kidnapping and presumed murder by Rumanian agents caused a public outcry in France. At a news conference June 9, President Francois Mitterrand, who French officials say was fully aware of the plot, kept up the deception by expressing "grave concern" at Mr. Tanase's disappearance. Shortly afterward, Mr. Mitterrand postponed a planned visit to Rumania.

After the apparently "successful" liquidation of Mr. Tanase, "Mr. Z" said he was able to return to Bucharest, where he was decorated for his services, and arrange for the departure of several members of his family. He said, however, that his mother had been unable to leave Rumania today as planned after the Paris daily Le Matin broke the story this morning.